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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUJUMBURA 000206

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SUBJECT: BURUNDI'S DEFENSE MINISTER: TROOPS IN SOMALIA
WITHIN TWO MONTHS?

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Moller for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a March 12 meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for African Affairs, James Swan, Burundi's Minister of Defense, Lt. Gen Germain Niyoyankana, projected that with U.S. logistical and financial assistance, Burundi could be ready to deploy troops to Somalia within two months. In response to U.S. plans to transform the Tripartite Plus Fusion Cell (TPFC) into a virtual cell, Lt. Gen. Niyoyankana urged the United States to continue face to face, facilitation to reinforce the commitment of all participants. He reported that the integration of former rebel forces into the Burundian military continues to be a success. Niyoyankana considers training an army that understands its role in a democratic society his primary objective in the evolution of the Burundian military. End Summary.

¶2. (U) This cable is the third in a series of three discussing DAS Swan's visit to Burundi. The first cable highlighted DAS Swan's message of appreciation to the government of Burundi (GOB) and recent events that threaten Burundi's progress. A second cable described DAS Swan's discussions concerning the PALIPEHUTU-FNL's threats to suspend their participation in the JVMM process.

¶3. (C) During a visit to Burundi March 11 - 13, DAS Swan thanked Lt. Gen. Germain Niyoyankana for Burundi's commitment to send 1700 troops to aid in the peacekeeping effort in Somalia, noting that the contribution of Burundian forces will assist the Somali government in Mogadishu to protect itself as the visibility of Ethiopian troops diminishes. DAS Swan added that stabilization of Somalia is a top priority for the USG in Africa, and we welcome Burundi's contribution to this effort. DAS Swan encouraged Burundi to consult with the African Union (AU) planning team in Addis Ababa to assess the needs of their peacekeeping force.

¶4. (C) Lt. Gen. Niyoyankana explained that Burundi wanted to share its experiences in conflict resolution with Somalia. Niyoyankana estimated that Burundi could deploy its forces in Somalia within two months. He noted, however, that although the political will to help the Somalis is strong, Burundi can not financially support an operation of this magnitude. He appealed to the United States to support the logistics of moving the troops and related equipment to the field, and promised to provide by the following day a draft list of specific equipment requirements. Although a Burundian delegation is currently in consultation with the AU planning team in Ethiopia, Niyoyankana believed it would be necessary to send a reconnaissance team to Kismayo to investigate technical requirements at the site where Burundians are to be deployed. He expressed particular concern for the protection of his forces. DAS Swan said the U.S. would be prepared to

provide some support, along with other partners, for the Burundian deployment. In a subsequent brief private conversation with Niyoyankana, DAS Swan urged that he also seek help from the South Africans in preparing for the deployment, and suggested the GOB discuss with the Ethiopians and Ugandans options for getting into Kismayo.

¶5. (C) Turning to security in the Great Lakes region, Lt. Gen. Niyoyankana said he understood the U.S. desire to slowly disengage from the Tripartite Fusion Cell process and to transform the working group into a new virtual cell. However, he advocated for continued U.S. hands-on participation in the near term. The Minister of Defense remarked that, as early as last year, Rwanda and Uganda had decided to end their participation in the TPFC but were persuaded to remain through the careful facilitation of the U.S. Niyoyankana suggested that perhaps a mixed, approach to a new version of the TPFC be adopted.

¶6. (C) Lt. Gen. Niyoyankana updated DAS Swan on the integration of former rebels into the Burundian Defense Forces. Burundi currently has an army of nearly 30,000, including 9,000 former rebel combatants. Niyoyankana asked for assistance to reinstate 7,000 families, as well as assistance for 3,000 people who have been handicapped by the war and training in infrastructure development. Niyoyankana concluded that his primary objective is the training of an army that understands its role in a democratic society. Given Burundi's perilous economic situation, he noted with concern that some demobilized combattants might be tempted by financial or political gain to join factions whose objectives may be detrimental to democratic stability.

¶7. (C) Comment: The Burundian military will need assistance

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to deploy its forces to Somalia. The GOB has made initial contacts with AU planners and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) but needs help getting to Kismayo for a reconnaissance trip. A USG contribution, along with help from other partners (such as France, who we understand may be prepared to provide some training) will be critical if the Burundian forces are to deploy within their rough two-month timeframe. End Comment.
BREITER